

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 14, 2013

Agenda Item: Waters Approved for Commercial Bait Seining – Annual Rule

Division: Fisheries **Action Needed:** Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

A bait fish seining license is required for: 1) persons 15 years of age and older to seine for and transport bait fish for commercial purposes in Montana; and 2) for any person who seines for and has in their possession more than 24 dozen non-game bait fish. The commission may designate waters that are allowed for these purposes, and FWP describes these waters annually in the Commercial Bait Seining Application form.

Public Involvement Process & Results

If approved by the commission, the changes proposed here, along with a rationale for each individual change, will be released for a 30-day public comment period. Based on the comments received, the list will be modified (if necessary) and proposed to the commission for final approval in January.

Alternatives and Analysis.

Twenty waters (19 lakes or ponds and 1 group of tributaries to a lake) are proposed for deletion from the approved seining water list, and one water is proposed for addition to the list. The primary reason most waters are proposed for deletion is that they do not produce suitable numbers of bait fish to make commercial seining a sustainable activity. Other reasons include: 1) a current lack of interest in commercial collections; 2) the concern that collections could deplete bait fish species necessary to maintain gamefish populations; 3) the potential for accidental collection and movement of predator fish (e.g. northern pike) that could negatively affect fish populations in other waters; 4) collection practices would interfere with salmonid spawning; or 5) ponds are private and no longer managed by FWP. The proposed changes include:

Western District: Ashley Lake tributaries, Stillwater River (Dog Lake downstream to the mouth) , Finger Lake, Fish Lake (Lincoln County), Echo Lake, Whitefish River, Herrig Creek (Little Bitterroot tributary)

Eastern District: Bailey Reservoir, Castle Rock Lake, Cow Creek Reservoir, Doug Gardner #2 Reservoir, Ester Reservoir, Johnson Reservoir, Lame Steer Reservoir, Lee (Sam) Reservoir, Little Warm Reservoir, Lyons Reservoir, McChesney Reservoir, Schlesinger Perch Pond, and South Sandstone Reservoir. Wibaux Pond (Wibaux County) is proposed for addition to the list because the bait fish populations are robust and able to sustain commercial harvest.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Because most of the proposed deletions have poor bait fish populations, there will be little impact on the local supply of bait fish, which will be provided by the waters which remain on the list. The addition of Wibaux Pond will actually increase supply for commercial purposes in the southeast part of the state.

Proposed Motion

I propose to approve these ponds for removal/addition to the list of lakes authorized for collection by bait fish seining license holders, pending review of public comments following a 30-day comment period.